



CHATTANOOGA

CHAPTER IV.

SLACK, THE FARMER'S SON.

Mark took his pipe and went down to the yard to have a smoke. Going back to the barn he entered into conversation with an old darky sitting on a barrel by the stable door and evidently master of the horse.

"Fine night, nuch," said the old darky.

"Yes, fine night, nuch," said Mark.

"That's not very good tobacco you're smoking, nuch. You'd better take some of this here."

"Thank you, nuch," said Mark.

"Do you hear any news, nuch?"

"No, nuch. My mother's dead, nuch."

"I don't get no news here, nuch. Is getting mighty thick at Chattanooga."

"Do you know how many are there?"

"I reckon 'bout five hundred thousand."

Mark laughed.

"You're not much at figures," he said.

"No, nuch. I ain't got no brain."

"Uch, I ain't got no brain either, nuch. I ain't got no brain either."

"Well, don't spit it all by tellin' father hands. Keep it to yourself."

"Sho nuff. I ain't gwine to tell no body."

Mark left Uncle Daniel chuckling on his barrel and strolled about the grounds. Presently he found himself walking near the front of the house.

The mother and daughter sat on the veranda in the moonlight. Presently the daughter came down the steps and advanced to where Mark was loitering.

"Mamma says that if you like you may—she would be pleased to have you come up and sit on the veranda."

"Thank you," Mark was about to lift his hat in his usual deferential manner, but suddenly remembered that he was not supposed to be a gentleman.

He followed the girl up to the veranda, and she placed a seat for him near where they were sitting.

"Your brother is a good deal younger than you," said the mother when Mark was seated.

"Oh, yes, mamma; he is ten years younger."

"You don't resemble each other at all. You are light, and he is dark."

"So we don't, Jakey's my stepbrother, you know."

"You didn't tell us that," remarked the lady.

"You're very thoughtful of him," said Miss Laura, "considering he is only your stepbrother."

"Waah, mamma, I'm very fond of him all the same."

"He seems to be a peculiar child."

"Yes, Jakey, he is peculiar, very peculiar, mamma."

"You haven't told us your name yet."

"Slack, I'm Farmer Slack's son."

"How many fields hands does your father own?"

"Father, he don't own no niggers at all. We're just only poor whites."

"You're very frank about it," said Laura.

"Wind, there ain't no use nigger purtensions."

"And you go to Chattanooga tomorrow?" asked the mother.

"Yes, mamma; I call there to do some trading."

"And you will return this way?"

"I reckon I'll be along here in a few days."

The mother continued the pumping process for awhile, but whether she made no progress, or whether Mark succeeded in establishing himself in her confidence, she arose and walked with all the stateliness of a southern high born matron into the house. There she resumed the book she had been reading earlier in the evening.

"What bright star is that?"

Mark had kept up his assumed character very well during her presence. Now that he was left alone with the daughter he was put to a much severer test. The girl had something of the stateliness of her mother as that stateliness had appeared in her mother's youth. Mark had been so used from his childhood to meet a refined bearing with an equally refined and he found it difficult to avoid doing so now.

"Don't you love to look at the stars, Mr. Slack?" asked the young lady.

"Waah, yes, Miss."

"My name is Laura Fain."

"I've always been fond of the science of astronomy," she said.

"Oh, I don't know nothing 'bout it," he said quickly. "I heard a man at Jasper talk once. He said a heap of queer things."

"What bright star is that?" pointing.

"Venus, I reckon."

"I wonder how far it is from us?" she said.

"Venus? Why Venus is sixty-eight millions of miles, I reckon."

"I happen to know that's a correct answer."

Mark suddenly became conscious of having forgotten himself. He recollected his position and resolved to proceed with greater care.

"How far is the moon?" asked Miss Fain.

"The moon's a hundred million miles, I reckon."

"Oh, no. You're far out of the way there. It's only about two hundred and forty thousand miles."

"Waah, now!" exclaimed Mark in well feigned surprise.

She looked searchingly at him, but Mark looked as if he had simply received an interesting piece of information.

"Do you like poetry?" she asked changing the subject.

"Someat."

"My favorite poet is Tennyson. Is he yours too?"

"This was dangerous ground for Mark. He had a special fondness for poetry, and was more likely to betray himself on this than on any other subject."

"No," he said, "I love 'Shelley best.'"

"Why, Mr. Slack, how can you understand Shelley? I can't."

"Waah, he's kinder obscurelike."

"If you do, I would like to hear you repeat it."

"Waah, I might give you a few lines of the 'Ode to the Spirit of Nature.'"

"Please do."

Mark would have done well to let the 'Ode to the Spirit of Nature' alone; but with a beautiful girl beside him, the half moon sinking in the west and all nature in repose, he momentarily forgot his assumed character entirely. He began, intending to give only a few lines and not to forget his dialect; but the spirit of nature was in him as well as in the poem, and by the time he had recited a few lines he was as oblivious to the character of Slack, the farmer's son, as if he had been the poet himself. Suddenly he awoke to the consciousness of having given the whole poem in his natural tone and with his ordinary accent.

"Mr. Slack," said his listener when he had finished, "did you learn that from a man in Jasper?"

"No—no—I—waah," he stammered, "I read it in a book."

He stole a glance at his companion, but failed to detect any unusual expression on her face. He took courage.

"What do you raise on your plantation?" she asked.

"Oh, we put in some potatoes and corn and straw this year."

"Straw?"

"No, no, no straw," Mark was a little conversant with the farmer's art as he was familiar with the poets. "I mean hay."

The girl looked at him and smiled.

"The wheat was all gotten in early this summer. I am told," she remarked casually.

"Yes, we got in our corn early. We just finished up before I came away."

"Waah, Mr. Slack!"

Mark knew that he had blundered again.

"Wheat is gathered in July," she informed the young farmer.

"I mean the corn," he said wildly.

"The corn comes later. It is ripening now."

Mark felt it was all up with him so far as deceiving Miss Fain as to his being a farmer, but he struck out boldly to undo some of the mischief.

"Waah, you see, Miss Fain, to tell the whole truth, I don't reckon much on my farm."

"A gentleman, for instance."

Mark made no reply. For the first time he detected irony in her tone.

"Mr. Slack—if that is really your name, which I don't believe—you are certainly not very complimentary to my sense of perception."

"How so?"

"In trying to make me think you are not an educated gentleman."

Mark saw the futility of keeping up the sham with Miss Laura Fain any longer. He resolved to give her so much of his confidence as was necessary to keep her from betraying him, if indeed he could do so at all. His manner and his tone changed in a twinkling.

"I will be frank with you. I am not what I have pretended, but I am not here to injure you or yours."

"Who are you?" she spoke with a certain severity that she had not shown before.

"I cannot tell you. My secret is not my own."

"Are you a Union man?"

"Yes."

"A northerner?"

"Yes, but let that suffice. You would regret it if I should confide anything more to you. Yet from this brief interview I have learned to trust you sufficiently to place my life in your keeping."

She thought a moment. A faint shudder passed over her.

"I don't want to know your secret."

"Will you tell your mother what you have discovered?" asked Mark anxiously.

"Not for worlds."

"You suspect?"

"Yes, yes. Don't say any more. Don't breathe another word. Only go away from here as soon as possible."

"I shall go tomorrow morning. I shall always hold you in grateful remembrance. You are a splendid lovely woman. I love you."

"Yes, yes; go—go early."

She rose and went into the house. In a few minutes a colored boy came out and told Mark that he would show him to his room. As Mark had been there before, he knew this meant that he was expected to retire for the night.

As he went by the parlor he glanced in. The mother sat by a lamp on a "center table" reading. Miss Fain's face was bent over a book. It was white as the margin of the page she pretended to read.

CHAPTER V.

GLORIOUS REVEALING.

When Mark went downstairs the next morning, followed by Jakey, they were invited into the breakfast room. Laura Fain was there, but her mother was not. Mark looked at Laura, but she avoided his gaze. He asked after her mother.

"Mamma's scarcely ever gets up to breakfast," he said as she poured out a smattering of coffee.

During the meal she said but little, and that only on commonplace subjects. She seemed to have more on her mind than a father who was taking his life in his hands, and studiously avoided looking at him at all.

Jakey ate heartily. Mark noticed him

eating with his knife and otherwise displaying his humble origin, while he was himself eating like a gentleman. He thought that it was lucky Mrs. Fain was not at the table.

After breakfast Mark followed his hostess through a door opening into a sitting room on the opposite side of the hall from the parlor.

"Miss Fain," he said, "I know too well the station of your family and southern customs not to accept as a gift the hospitality you have afforded. I can only express my indebtedness, and the hope that some day the war may be over and I can come down here and show my gratitude for something of far more moment to me than a night's lodging."

He paused, and then added:

"May I ask a question? Are you a Union or a Confederate girl?"

"Confederate."

Mark looked at her meekly.

"I inferred from what you said last night that you will not betray me."

"I will not."

"But you think you ought to."

"I do."

Mark stood gazing at her. She was looking out of the window with a troubled expression.

"Miss Fain," he said, "you may be doing wrong; you may be doing right. At any rate you are acting the part of a woman, and this act makes you in my eyes the loveliest woman that lives."

The words were scarcely spoken when the muscles of the girl's face contracted into an expression of horror. Mark could not understand why his speech had so affected her. The natural uncertainty of his position impelled him to look about him for the cause. Glancing out of the front window he saw an officer in gray uniform on horseback in the act of reaching down to open the gate.

"Now go if you can!" she said.

"Come, quick!" she said, seizing his arm. "No, no! Mamma! She doesn't know. Oh, what shall we do?"

Mark took her by the hand and spoke to her calmly, but quickly. "Call Jakey for me, and we will both go down stairs and from there to the barn. We can then go out without meeting this officer, for he is doubtless coming in. There is no special danger. We shall meet plenty of soldiers before we return."

She flew out of the room to find Jakey. While she was gone Mark watched the approaching horseman. He was a fine specimen of a southern man—tall and slender, with long black hair, mustache and goatee and a fine black eye. He looked, as he came riding up the road, the impersonation of the southern gentleman.

Before he had dismounted Mark and Jakey were on their way to the barn.

Laura Fain opened the front door just as the officer was coming up the steps.

"Why, Cameron?" she exclaimed, "how did you get away? I thought you told me you were to be officer of the guard today."

"I persecuted my friend the adjutant to detail another man."

"Was there a special reason?"

"Certainly. I positively couldn't stand it another day not to see you. Besides we are momentarily expecting orders to cross to this side of the river."

"But you will be nearer to us then, won't you?"

"I am afraid not. Once on this side we'll not stop nearer than Dallas or Poca. We may join Colonel Forrest near Sparta, or wherever he may be, doubtless somewhere in the enemy's rear. He seldom troubles the Yankees in front. But you are not listening, my darling, and you are pale. You are not ill?"

"Certainly not."

"You are sorry that I came?"

"Why, Cameron, what do you mean? You know I always want you to come."

She led the way into the sitting room, from which Mark had disappeared but a minute before—a minute is a long while sometimes. Mrs. Fain entered and received the guest most graciously.

Captain Cameron Fitz Hugh was a young Virginian, a graduate of the University of Virginia law school, the son of wealthy parents, whose acres and negroes were numbered by thousands. He had known the Fains before the war. Mrs. Fain having been born and reared in the Old Dominion. During a visit of Laura to his people, shortly before the breaking out of hostilities, he had fallen in love with her, had proposed and was accepted. Both families being agreeable, the two were engaged to be married.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, captain," said Mrs. Fain.

"I did not suppose I could get away today."

"Everything is unexpected in these times. We never know who is coming to us. Last night I slept uneasily for fear that we harbored a guerrilla in the house."

"How is that?" asked Captain Fitz Hugh.

"Where are the strangers, Laura?"

"I think they are gone, mamma."

"A countryman and his little brother," said Mrs. Fain to the captain. "Laura thought him quite a gentleman for one so poorly dressed."

"But I changed my mind, mamma," said Laura quickly.

"And what was the occasion of so sudden a change?" asked the captain.

"Why—why, when we were sitting on the veranda after you went in, mamma."

"Sitting on the veranda with a countryman?" exclaimed the lover.

"Well, yes; mamma said to invite him up. But I was going to say."

Laura's inventive powers had gained time to act by the interruption.

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the black boat around Moccasin point. Mark was anxious to enter Chattanooga either late at night or soon after daylight, hoping to meet few people, that his entrance might not be noticed. He cast his eye about for some means of crossing the river. Noticing a skiff moored just below a hut, he surmised that the skiff belonged to some one living in the hut. Going to the door he knocked.

"Who's there?"

"Do y' own the skiff on the river below here?"

"Waal, suppose I does?"

"I want to cross."

"What d' y' want ter do ther fur at this time o' night?"

"Father dyen. Just got word a spell ago."

"Wint'll y' giro ter get over?"

"Five dollars."

"What kind o' shipplasters?"

"Greenbacks."

"Whar d' y' git 'em?"

"From some people ez got 'em tradin' with the Yankee seजरant Battle Creek."

"All right, stranger, but it's a sight o' bad times ter be called fer a man's doan at night. You us go down ter the river in I'll cover y' with my gun tel I know yer all right."

"I won't mind a small thing like that if you'll put me in my little brother across."

Mark and his companion went down to the river. Pretty soon a will looking man, with a beard growing straight on from his face like the spokes of a cart wheel, came cautiously down, covering them with a sluggun as he proceeded.

"Got a pass, stranger?"

"No."

"Reckon they won't let y' land wher y' got over ther."

"These army fellers are like a rat trap," said Mark; "they ain't so particular as to go in; it's the goen out they don't like. But y' better try to strike a point on the river whar they ain't no guard."

"Far how much?"

"An extra fiver."

"Greenback?"

"You ain't very patriotic. Won't y' take Confederate bills?"

"Not when I can get green ones."

"Y' ain't a Union man, are y'?"

"No. But I know a valuable thing when I see it."

The night would have been a very dark had it not been for the moon behind the clouds. As it was, the boat could only be seen from the shore when they drew too near. They pulled up the river near of Moccasin point, keeping near the east bank. They could see campfires of guards on the other shore. Once getting too near a river pocket, they

Children Cry for

men and solitary cabin. He has never seen a railroad, and the stage drivers from the nearest station try their utmost to persuade him to go to town and at least look at a train of cars. But his invariable answer is: "Do you think I'm going down there to be hauled up by one of them there blamed engines? Not much!"

Nearly all the men who live this life of solitude very long get a bit queer in the head, and "Old Gil" is no exception to the rule. He has a ridiculous description of himself which declares that he is "the best man in the United States or adjoining territories, either directly or indirectly, financially, generally, ethically or constitutionally or unmodified." The old man is a hard worker, and when he is not busy on his ranch he is working energetically making "slides"—that is, chaparral split and sawed by hand from big pine trees.

Old man Lambert, who has a cabin in the high Sierras some thirty miles back of the Yosemite, is another of the mountain hermits. He has neither ranch nor mining claim, but lives by what he shoots and by an occasional few dollars earned from camping parties. He has lived alone in that same spot for years and years, and will in all likelihood stay there until he dies. There are months at a time that he does not see another human being. A party of campers one summer found him making a huge stone wall that seemed to have no purpose whatever. To surprise they asked him what he was piling up those stones for. "Why," he said, "a man's got to do something, up here alone, or he'll go wrong, sure."—Cor. Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle.

A Sermon Exchange.

The latest enterprise which we hear announced in the young and enterprising west is the "Sermon exchange," of Chicago. According to popular belief the practice of clergymen has been to write sermons until they had filled a barrel. Then the barrel would be turned upside down and the sermons all preached over again. Where a minister remained in a church a great many years the congregation would after awhile begin to know when the barrel was turned.

Some sermons were looked forward to with much interest and others with more or less dismay. The Sermon exchange is to do away with all of this. It is no longer necessary to preach a sermon over a second time. The preacher can take an old sermon and the twenty-five cents to it. This he sends to the exchange and receives one written by some one else by return mail, or if he has no sermon to send he can get one for fifty cents.—Balt. Herald.

Pitcher's Castoria.

entiment, in nature. Upon this ground, and this alone, I obtained a divorce."

Tear away sentimental verbiage and the woman's case stands thus: Her husband's ideas and tastes were not, to her apprehension, favorable to the development of what she stretched as the life she ought to lead. Her individual happiness outranked all other considerations in her mind. The marriage voided of her own free will, because she then fancied that she was forwarding her selfish interests by the union, became a rope of sand when inclination decreed to another quarter.—Marion Harland in Harper's Bazar.

The Origin of an Expression.

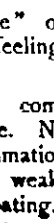
Mr. McElroy tells this: A few years ago some one defined a Mugwump to be a person who is educated beyond his intellect." The remark was credited to several leading New Yorkers. But one day, in reading Matthew Arnold's essay on Translating Homer I came across this sentence: "The late Duke of Wellington said of a certain peer that 'it was a great pity his education had been so far too much for his intellects.'"—New York World.

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or womb; what-
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